# THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

IV, No. 5 | UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS: PHILADELPHIA | May, 1942

UNIV. OF PENNSYLVANIA
OCT 8 1942
PERIODICAL DEPT.

## ble of Democracy" ll Under Way

### factory Arrangements Publication Expected

blication of the "Bible of cracy," an anthology of lit- re expressive of the demo- way of life proposed at the napolis meeting of CEA in nber, is expected some time in mmer. It will appear in am- me for use in schools and col- in the Fall, according to e F. Reynolds, Colorado Uni- y, Chairman of the Commit- hich includes, besides Profes- eynolds, Donald F. Connors, am University; Harry R, l, University of Maryland; la E. Winslow, Goucher Col-

erial is being selected on the of its effective embodiment of t in American life.

book, which will not bear le "Bible of Democracy," is xpected to contain in the orhood of 75,000 words, ap- nately the amount of reading in a *Reader's Digest*. It will pocket-size volume, and the ittee points out that it is not regarded as a textbook. Al- the publisher cannot be nced yet, the Committee is nt that very satisfactory ar- ments can be made, for a ctive interest is being shown project.

itional suggestions for a title or material to be included e welcome. They should be o George F. Reynolds, 1220 View, Boulder, Colorado.

## Elusive Stallion: s on Poetry

ke to your bosom with a smile s easy and simple and near," e has advised; yet the gener- f men still seem to shy away poetry as from an obscure tion of the elect or the pre- s.

listens to the voices of dead murmuring across the cen- of the perilous gift by which ved and died: one broods on light that never was, on sea l;" this "language of a state is" (to recall Symons' quo- of Mallarmé); this effort to ate for us the "sweet ever- Voices;" this "sword of ng, ever unsheathed, which es the scabbard that would n it;" this "image of life ex- d in its eternal truth" which ms from decay the visitations divinity in man;" this "spon- s overflow of powerful feel- (whether or not necessarily notion recollected in tranquil- even in Walter de la Mare's ng interpretation); this

(*Continued on Page 3*)

## On Collegiate Illiteracy

Do you teach virtual illiterates? I do, and I fear that many other professors have students who cherish false or uselessly vague ideas of the words and expressions used in publications, on lecture platforms, and on broadcasts.

To determine whether for the practical purposes of citizenship your students are virtual illiterates, I beg you to require definite explanations of words in a direct exposition or significant discussion of contemporary public affairs, such as a selection from *Vital Speeches*. Excellent for this purpose, as also for study, is Bernadotte E. Schmitt's address on "The Roosevelt-Churchill Declaration: the Terms of a Future Peace" in the issue for March 1, 1942. Since, like Chaucer's poor Parson, I practice my gospel before preaching it, I here disclose the amazing misconceptions of my students, in the hope that some of you may be able to prove that your students know what they say and hear.

I asked definitions of ten important words in Professor Schmitt's speech: ironical, aggrandizement, plebiscite, aggression, sovereignty, exiled, federation, hypothesis, repudiate, sadistic. Marked with Christian charity, their papers averaged only 53 on the scale of 100; individual scores ranged from 30 to 80 except for one 95. *Ironical* meant to them critical, severe, unnatural, unusual, associated with fate, using fortitude or perseverance. Less than a fifth of the students knew *aggrandizement*. They insisted that *plebiscite* was a petition, a document, a slave, a city person, the lowest class, a vote like the Gallup poll. Some defined *aggression* as progress, enmity, success, strife, fast work, good army movements. They believed a *hypothesis* to be a foundation, a known fact, conclusion, answer, rule, the final law set down by men who study a subject, and—the side of a triangle. They guessed *sadistic* as tragic, spiritual, sad, instructive, cynical, fatalistic, unfair, with an out-dated point of view, having the attributes of higher learning.

As some students think that the context always reveals the meaning, my second test required explanations of twenty phrases of fundamental importance in reading of international affairs or the war. This test, marked with the same leniency, gave the same average, 53, with individual scores from 30 to 75. Numerous misspellings indicated unfamiliarity with many of these terms.

The first phrase, *the question of minorities*, puzzled them. *Alleged mistreatment* (2) was usually understood, but *tariff walls* (3) conveyed to three-fourths of the students no idea of prohibitive height. *Defection from the League of Nations* (4) was very vague to them; *the quota system for immigration* (5) was not once well explained. *The Atlantic Charter* (6) was missed by half; they thought it meant the right to use the Atlantic, how to keep it free from submarines, the danger zone on the Atlantic, laws concerning ships there, and the "four freedoms." Two-thirds missed the sense of *politically expedient* (7) in spite of courageous guessing. *The New Order in Europe* (8) was known but confused with the Fascist movement. *Access to raw materials* (9) disclosed that they thought the word *access* meant equal rights, free use, proximity, bountiful supply, production, or amount. *Reciprocal trade treaties* (10) and the *crushing burden of armaments* (11) were fairly well interpreted. *The*

(*Continued on Page 3*)

## Don't Let Up on English Instruction, Knox and Stimson Advise College English Teachers

### Heads of Navy and War Say Effective Expression in Writing and Speaking Is Essential Part of Defense Training

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON
April 15, 1942

Secretary, College English Association:

Your letter on behalf of the College English Association is a welcome evidence of the intelligent and whole-hearted way in which the educational institutions of the nation are coöperating in our all-out War Effort.

As you suggest, the war-time value of scientific or vocational studies in our schools and colleges is obvious. Competent training in such curricula leads to a variety of immediately useful services under the administration of the Navy Department both in shore stations and on ships at sea.

Much less obvious is the present need in the Navy for competence in the use of the English language. And yet I would go so far as to say that the ability to use clear, concise and forceful English in speech and in writing underlies and reinforces efficiency in any and all branches of the Naval Service.

In the expression of this personal conviction I am sure I utter the considered opinions of both Active and Reserve Officers of the United States Navy now on duty afloat or ashore. Moreover, judging by the many records they have left behind, I also echo the approval of those who have gone on before. In the roster of distinguished names engraved on Navy scrolls of honor occur many of those who have shown themselves to have been masters of English as well as of seamanship. Contrary to a too prevalent misconception, the two excellences are not incompatible.

In view of these considerations I shall be obliged if you will convey to the members of your Association my very hearty endorsement of their mission in the National War Effort and my no less genuine appreciation of their spirit in conceiving and carrying out this valued contribution.

Sincerely yours,
Secretary of the Navy
(Signed) FRANK KNOX

WAR DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON
April 4, 1942

Secretary, College English Association:

I can appreciate your concern as to the effect of the War Effort upon the courses of study in colleges. In general, what is required is not necessarily a reduction of effort on basic studies, such as English, but rather a vastly increased emphasis on those studies having a special bearing on our War Effort.

In war, as in peace, the ability to report facts and to express ideas clearly is an important attribute of the leader in every field of action. Teachers of English have a very real contribution to make in developing and encouraging that ability.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) HENRY L. STIMSON,
Secretary of War

## Implementing Semantics

Following Mr. Embler's article in the October NEWS LETTER, several teachers have asked us here at Syracuse about what classroom procedures we have used in our first-term freshman course, which we have based upon General Semantics. Since we are proud of our results, I am glad to answer as best I can here, mentioning only what experience has shown to be the more significant procedures.

We started with the modest yet comprehensive aim of teaching students to read and write more adequately; we wanted to train students to analyze and relate to their own experience what they read, instead of merely "agreeing" or "disagreeing" verbally with it. Hence we tried throughout the course to discuss writing (and the reading

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# THE NEWS LETTER

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*Published 8 Times a Year by the*
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS
for the
***College English Association***

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## Correction

Editorial inadvertence was responsible for a mistake in the brief statement in the March NEWS LETTER concerning Theodore Morrison, Vice-President of CEA and author of Chap Book III. Robert S. Hillyer, Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, whose poetry especially is widely known, has general charge of the elective composition courses at Harvard. Mr. Morrison has supervision of "English A," the required course for freshmen, and teaches "English A-3," a course devoted to the writing of fiction, verse, and criticism.

## We Say It Again

Discussion of the relative merits of "cultural" and "vocational" studies, and even the argument as to which are which, is so timeworn and threadbare that the very words have little more than an annoyance value. But just now, because preparation for the business of war is dominating educational patterns and plans, they are reappearing in academic discussion. It therefore seems worth while to suggest here and now that the two words are actually synonymous.

All studies that have been defined as cultural are ultimately vocational, or no school would be permitted to continue them for another moment. And studies that are termed vocational are ultimately cultural, unless someone can be found who denies that skill acquired by the hand reacts upon the mind.

It is really a question of immediacy. Vocational studies prepare immediately for the task; cultural ones prepare with more deliberation, focusing attention upon groundwork.

These obvious truths are appropriate at this time, when young men in our colleges are being prepared for a mechanized war and when there is an inclination on the part of many over-impulsive administrators to drop from the program all studies and practices which do not provide *immediate* training.

And such reiteration is appropriate in this issue of THE NEWS LETTER, which contains messages from the Secretaries of War and the Navy. "Basic studies" is the phrase used by Colonel Stimson to cover those subjects which discipline the mind and make way for the more skillful and intelligent controlling of the eye and hand.

The preceding comment is addressed principally to teachers and administrators. The following, perhaps, should reach the ears of college students and prospective college students. With the knowledge that the number of such readers of THE NEWS LETTER is probably zero, we nevertheless print what President Roosevelt wrote to Administrator McNutt more than a year ago:

> Reports have reached me that some young people who had planned to enter college this fall, as well as a number of those who attended college last year, are intending to interrupt their education at this time because they feel that it is more patriotic to work in a shipyard, or to enlist in the Army or Navy, than it is to attend college. Such a decision would be unfortunate.
>
> We must have well-educated and intelligent citizens who have sound judgment in dealing with the difficult problems of today. We must also have scientists, engineers, economists, and other people with specialized knowledge, to plan and to build for national defense as well as for social and economic progress. Young people should be advised that it is their patriotic duty to continue the normal course of their education, unless and until they are called, so that they will be well prepared for greatest usefulness to their country. They will be promptly notified if they are needed for other patriotic services.

## Thoughts on Usage

These are bitter days for the purist; for the realist in the classroom is finding value in the vernacular and permitting all sorts of vulgarisms on the ground that the student knows what he wants to say, the words fit the situation, and the classroom audience knows what they mean; while the realist in literature is reproducing the colloquialisms of every human type from the mountain-white to the tough East-side baby without the faintest blush of shame, even using it himself without quotation marks.

The poor old purist might survive all this if he could only barricade himself behind the dictionary. But today the dictionary fails him. It puts in everything, and when we say everything, we are saying a mouthful. Of course there are those faint italics which classify a word as *slang, colloquial, obsolete*, but yet the word is there, invested with the dignity of print and entrenched within that holy of holies, the standard dictionary.

A gossipy friend whispered to us the other day that "alright" could now be found in Webster's. Memories of red marks on millions of freshman theme papers crowded our mind. Suffering a faint attack of vertigo, we found not only "alright" (classified neither as slang nor colloquial), but just below it we found "alrighty" declared to be an adverb, and in italics described mildly as slang. It is true that "alright" was followed by the phrase "commonly found but not recognized by authorities as in good use." This, however, seemed to be an attack upon the authorities rather than upon the term. With some hesitancy we pushed on a little further and found our pet aversion, "broadcasted," attributed to radio, but classified as neither slang nor vernacular. A little further on we came upon "enthuse" as a verb. In *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, this is described as a verb, transitive and intransitive, and is classified as colloquial. Our symptoms by this time were such that a stimulant was clearly indicated. We may search further tomorrow, but if okey-dokey is there we perish.

All this serves as preface to a mention of Professor Haber's *A Writer's Handbook of American Usage*.* Here is a handbook following the pattern of many other convenient little volumes of the sort, except that it boldly asserts the dignity of the English language as written and spoken in North America. There is no surrender of standards; the author condones neither *It looks like it might rain* nor *This trailer sleeps six persons*, but he proves himself fully aware of changes and developments in the American language and faces them cheerfully. Illustrations of acceptable usage are drawn from American writers.

On the whole the book is conservative as well as "handy," and its chief fault lies merely in the implications of its title, for there is nothing here to offend even a British purist. Almost all "Americanisms" in the book are to be found only in these columns headed "wrong usage."

And this further reminds us of what seems an inconsistency in the left wing group of teachers and theorizers, who feel that individuality is fettered and expression becomes flat unless the writer be permitted to use the language of the corner drug store or the fraternity house or, though we don't wish to appear snobbish, of the ash man.

Yet these gentry who are so indifferent to nihilism in syntax and vocabulary earnestly advocate precision and purity in pronunciation and enunciation. Speech correction clinics are not concerned only with stammering and stuttering and the like, but with "correctness"—a word a left-winger would blush to use in connection with the written language. "Gumment (for *government* in case you can't guess), "qualdy" (for *quality*), and "sink, ink," the student is told are definitely wrong, and the same is said about improper accents.

Though a case can properly be made for vulgarisms, colloquialisms, and jargon when direct discourse is used or when the author's words are associated with a character and not with himself, when the author speaks *in propria persona* he should mind his manners, though with due regard for whether formality or informality is called for. "Liberal" books of usage might make this distinction, but they don't, probably in the belief that freshmen will not grasp it anyway.

The point is that although many listeners will not know the difference when a broadcaster says "martyrer" (Lowell Thomas), or confuses the accent in "survey" (Lowell Thomas), or says "inexorable" (William L. Shirer) or "présages" (any garden variety of broadcaster), some hearers lose their respect for the violator of proper pronunciation, whereas proper pronunciation would do no harm unless it were affected. And the same principle applies to syntax and diction, written or spoken.

* *A Writer's Handbook of American Usage*, Tom B. Haber, The Ohio State University, 150 Pages, $1.00, Longmans, Green & Company.

## From the Mail-Bag

Dear Editor:

The statement by Gelett Burgess in a recent NEWS LETTER opposing Professor Alexander's statement that "most slang is ephemeral" finds me enthusiastically seconding his position. In my recent book on "Army Talk" (Princeton) there is ample evidence that a great deal of civilian slang which has crept into our Army at various times has remained and become a permanent part of soldier speech. There it stays, like "jawbone," even though it dies out of use in civilian circles.

This statement, of course, does not take into consideration the fact that almost all purely Army slang, if it becomes decently established, is permanent. The reason is that new soldiers think that one of the ways to be recognized as good soldiers is to adopt the language of old soldiers, and there is consequently a vast amount of military language which remains current for long years, for decades certainly, and possibly even for centuries, which is not even recorded in books used by military people.

Very truly yours,
Elbridge Colby,
War Department

## Poets' Corner

Lines suggested by a limerick in the April NEWS LETTER:

When folks who are simple and shy
Say "eyether," and "Yes, it is I,"
I'll bet their vernacular
Feels just as spectacular
As I do in my tails and white tie.

My English professor is quaint;
He finds too much cause for complaint.
Of this I am surest—
I *won't* be a purist.
He don't think I am, and I ain't.

C. E. A.

## The Elusive Stallion: Notes on Poetry

*(Continued from Page 1)*

rhythmical creation of beauty"—ne listens and broods, yet remains aced with the question "What *is* oetry?" and the realization that except figuratively, as the poets emselves have done) it is folly play the schoolmaster and attempt to frame definitions.

What follows is no attempt to efine poetry; it is merely an effort set down certain apprehenons—whether original or merely greed to—concerning the art. numeration is used for greater arity.

1) Poetry is in its very nature a piritual essence, a *power*, which ay occasionally be sensed in creaon (which in one view is also ecord) or—more terribly—in that anic agony or destruction which metimes precedes creation. Therere it follows that poetry (though ordinary usage the term is reictedly taken to signify "poetry words") is confined to no single edium of expression. This means, r example, that no one should be nfused to recognize that music—onrad's "art of arts"—is merely etry shining through a pattern hose appeal is even more lumiously direct than that of words, ore quick to strike home emoonally because there need be no tration through the mind.

2) Poetry necessarily reflects that newy vitality, that relishing of eer existence, perhaps best exessed in either the one extreme joy or the other extreme of elancholy, possible only to a reization of the constant imminence tragedy. Nor is there anything ecordant between poetry and huor, which is merely one type of sponse to tragedy, whether immint or resolved.

3) Poetry is netted in symbols—e, color, mass, sound-indication evolved by men to record emotion hich may include deliberate ought, with its varying—and varously conditioned—degrees of sigficance, as well as those psychogical apprehensions interrelated th—and consequently clarified or ecured by—thought and ultiately dependent upon individual nsory equipment). It is recogniz le and operative according to the egree of *unhampered* sensitivity haracteristic of the reader—the tener—the observer—at the moent of presentation. The poet, as instrument of creation, is by rtue of natural gifts able more ibtly than other men to compreend the forces operating to proce what we call "art." Hence his alysis, comment, and criticism e more deserving of attention an other men's.

4) Emotion being the instrument revelation (its nature enabling to cut through immediately to sentials), and a lyric form being arly the most directly emotional subjective—in character, it seems pparent that whatever is lyric mes closest to representing *quintential* poetry; that in the meum of words, for instance, epic d narrative verse are successful *as poetry* primarily in so far as they contain lyrical elements, even the "dramatic" depending for its most sheerly memorable effectiveness—

Not poppy, nor mandragora—
on lyrical outbursts. Incidentally, it would also seem that a lyric in words usually demands (and finds for itself) metre and form—at least cadence—because of the spiritual music of a defined mood and because emotion is fundamentally rhythmical in nature, bringing not only sudden insight and clarification of thought but also that flash and glow which common speech assumes in poetry. (And if this opinion indicts one as appearing to prefer intense "lyrical cry" to a calm sense of the Tennysonian "deep below the deep," "height beyond the height," one can only answer, "Is not 'lyrical cry' merely that very sense whirled to a poignant flash of realization?")

5) Poetry—whatever its guise—would seem to involve, beside subjectivity (the inner element), sincerity (implying, even in humor, freedom from posturing), inevitability (that sense of compulsion and utter rightness which tends to war on anything rhetorical, didactic, or purely "occasional"), and universality (that quality suggestive of the poet's realization of what is fundamental in humanity).

6) Poetry—despite the seeming pretentiousness of one's phrasing—is an echo of the tides of infinity, which no thinking man can well doubt is one with death (that is, incomprehensible life, spirit being indestructible, since it is in nature the opposite of matter, through which it, however, frequently operates). It is therefore, in a very real sense, premonition.

7) Religion being an acknowledgment of, and an attempted adjustment to, conscious being (capacity—in joy, or sorrow, or relative emotional neutrality—for more or less understandable recognition and partial sharing thereof) and the most critical of all its premonitions, that of death (the folding in of all beauty), the basic connection between poetry and religion (though not necessarily creedism) has always been apparent.

8) Technical form in itself (as Wordsworth recognized) is no determinant of poetic quality in any medium, though an accomplice after the fact," to adapt a vulgar phrase. Nevertheless, a tendency toward design is always apparent, since even the occasional disorder of nature is inevitably set against a larger background of Order — Plan — whether or not this be based on Mutation not readily justifiable to the limited human mind.

9) In the end, it is perhaps enough to say that poetry—though, as Ben Jonson insisted, it "utters somewhat above a mortal mouth"—is beauty, is joy, is terror, is melancholy; but poetry is also *katharsis*, is acquiescence, is humility without humiliation, is—strangely—peace.

George Brandon Saul,
University of Connecticut

## On Collegiate Illiteracy

*(Continued from Page 1)*

*problem of reparations* (12) baffled the class; it signified to them rehabilitation, the war debt, building back social standards, military sanctions, repairing old war equipment, etc. Half the class could not fathom the phrase *highly contentious issues* (13), even after the word *issue* was defined. *A military armistice* (14) was unintelligible to three-fourths or more; they thought it a surrender of men and armaments, a peace treaty, a disarmament, an agreement on armaments for each nation. *The disruption of economic units* (15) and *a totalitarian regime* (16) were better understood. *The evacuation of the Rhineland* (17) betrayed no idea of history since 1918. *A concession to Germany* (18) was the best known of all. *To exploit a neighbor* (19) elicited such meanings as to overrun, to insult, to find out, to examine, to usurp, to probe into his business, to pilfer, to invade, to attack a country suddenly and defeat it. *The gospel of war* (20) was defined as war talk, war aims, the scruples of war, standards for men to follow in war time, the real truth about war, propaganda, certain things that will not be done, the inside story of all wars which is that war never pays.

A somewhat superior evening class averaged only 63 on these phrases, though it included some rather high executives and men in the FBI. This cross-section of not unsuccessful American men, in fact, have regularly known only about five-eighths of the words asked them from their reading.

Need one comment on such ignorance? It is one reason why our citizens took very little interest in this war before December 7. They understand shots but not words. Yet a democracy cannot flourish without enlightened public opinion. And a public that misunderstands so much of what they hear and read cannot be enlightened.

What can we do? More data and suggestions are presented in my article, "Words, Words, Words," in *School and Society* for February 24, 1940. Younger students must study more foreign languages, preferably Latin, before the modern languages. All students must be made so conscious of their ignorance of words that they will concentrate when they read or listen, and will use the dictionary sufficiently and intelligently. Common sense and indefatigable industry, based on an acute consciousness of sin, help college students more than ingenious devices in semantics or extra vocabulary books. Instructors must require definitions of the terms used in their subjects. And, whether any graces of style are noticed or taught, English instructors must teach the meanings of words, and must stress thought and facts.

Geraldine P. Dilla,
The University of Kansas City

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There is a great discovery still to be made in Literature, that of paying literary men by the quantity they do not write.—Carlyle.


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## This Device Should Be Practical Enough

[What follows is reprinted from a small folder prepared last Summer by the "Committee on English Usage" of Simmons College and sent to teachers of English in secondary schools. Wylie Sypher, Chairman of the Committee, writes that it has met with universal approval—as well it might. College English faculties should be obliged to do no more than review fundamentals, and the value of emphasizing a highly literary style in secondary schools at the expense of clarity is doubtful. It is doubtful enough in preparatory schools; it is more so in schools whose graduates are less likely to go to college. And in any case, the value of letting secondary schools know just what is expected is obvious.—Ed.]

### THE ABILITIES IN WRITING ESSENTIAL TO COLLEGE WORK

In the belief that colleges and secondary schools must increasingly co-operate in relating undergraduate education to secondary education, Simmons College has issued this announcement, which is intended to lessen the breach between the writing done in high school and the writing done in college. Simmons is aware of both the difficulties in preparing students for entrance to college, and the unexpected obstacles certain students meet in beginning their higher education. Simmons College wishes to encourage such relationships with secondary schools that all those students whom it admits will do credit to themselves and to the institutions from which they have been graduated.

Because it educates for the professions, Simmons is particularly concerned that its undergraduates maintain a reputable standard of English usage in all their courses. Accordingly, the College has undertaken to define as precisely as possible what basic skills in writing the entering student should have.

This definition is issued for two additional reasons: first, to answer inquiries commonly made by teachers of English in secondary schools; and, second, to meet the self-criticism among the colleges as to whether the skills in writing that they desire have been indicated definitely enough.

The following statements are in no way to be taken as a list of requirements for entrance to the College; rather, they are a summary of the observations of those who teach freshmen.

Neither do these statements define an acceptable standard of usage in a large sense, nor suggest methods of teaching composition. The purpose is to mention the basic skills in writing that many graduates of secondary schools do not have. If the incoming student is prepared in the following respects, she can avoid handicaps not only in English courses but in every course, professional or nonprofessional, that the College offers.

In preparing this announcement, the College is indebted to the following reports:

1. *Language in General Education* (A Report of the Committee on the Function of English in General Education for the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, New York, Appleton-Century, 1940)
2. *Language Study in American Education* (Modern Language Association of America, Commission on Trends in Education, New York, 1940)
3. Noyes, Edward S. and Stalnaker, John M., *Report on the English Examination of June 1937* (College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 1938)
4. *Report of the Language Committee of the School and College Conference on English,* 1940. Copies may be obtained from Douglas A. Shepardson, Treasurer, Box 308, Wallingford, Connecticut.)

### BASIC GRAMMAR

The student should:

1. Avoid the "verbless sentence," the subordinate clause punctuated as if it were a sentence, and the "sentence" which for any other reasons fails to make a complete statement.
2. Avoid pronouns such as "this," "that," or "it," whenever they do not properly and clearly refer to a noun. Faulty reference is very common when "this," "that," or "it," begins a sentence.
3. Avoid the dangling modifier, that is, a modifying expression that does not clearly refer to an expressed antecedent. The "dangling participle" is common in student writing.
4. Avoid stringy sentences, particularly sentences with "and" and "so" used as connectives between clauses.

### BASIC PUNCTUATION

The following simples rules are generally accepted in the interest of clearness of expression:

1. Independent clauses must be separated by either (a) a comma and a conjunction (such as *and, but, nor,* or *for*), or (b) a semicolon. *However, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, accordingly, yet, consequently, still, indeed, therefore,* etc., are adverbs that may be used instead of a conjunction between independent clauses; if they are so used, a semicolon must be placed before them.
2. Commas are necessary to set off (a) introductory phrases or clauses with a verb form in them, and (b) nonessential (nonrestrictive) words, phrases, and clauses.
3. The dash is not to be used as a substitute for commas, semicolons, and periods.

The student should also be familiar with the customary punctuation of dates and addresses.

### SPELLING

If the entering student can spell the words on the usual "demon" list, she will probably have little difficulty.

### ORGANIZATION OF MATERIAL AND PARAGRAPHING

The entering student should be able to write a clear, orderly exposition in every course she takes. This ability is important in both examinations and reports. The organization and full development of paragraphs is a test of maturity in thinking and writing.

The College believes that the required writing in English in the secondary school should not aim primarily at "literary" composition, or "style"; more important is the ability to think through a subject, to choose the material pertinent to a discussion of that subject, and to organize that material logically and clearly. The student who has been encouraged to write "rhetorical" English is at a grave disadvantage. Also harmful is the emphasis upon "literary criticism" as a theme for writing; apparently such "literary criticism" affords less opportunity for closely reasoned discussion than many nonliterary subjects. If by criticism is meant understanding rather than judgment, the disadvantage is lessened; yet if the student has written upon exclusively literary topics, she seems to suffer from the belief that "English" is what one *adds* to a discussion of history or physics after all the historical and scientific facts are dealt with.

In brief, any training that enables the entering student to make clear the structure and progress of a discussion, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, will be of the highest value to her throughout her college course.

### "RHETORIC"

The College is able to make the following observations:

1. Clarity of discussion is preferable to a forced "originality" of subject or expression.
2. The brief, direct sentence clarifies discussion.
3. Wordiness is one of the chief disabilities of the entering student.
4. The student's attempt to write "elegantly" usually leads to an abuse of large, unusual words.
5. The adjective is not so important as entering students have often been led to believe.
6. Entering students usually labor under the impression that any discussion must have an "introduction," a "body," and a "conclusion." The "introduction" and the "conclusion" usually are a series of sentences without content or purpose.
7. Much incompetent and shallow student writing results from failure to clarify, develop, and illustrate general statements.
8. The ability of the student to communicate by orderly, competent discussion is of far greater value than her avoidance of such petty "errors" as split infinitives.

### READING

The entering student should be able to read "nonliterary" material with such full awareness of its meaning that she can summarize its main ideas and be conscious of the means by which those ideas are developed. She will especially benefit from a study of paragraphs, *a study involving more than the précis;* she should perceive all the methods within the paragraph by which meaning is conveyed. Such an ability to read necessarily implies more than appreciation of narrative or descriptive writing; it implies the careful analysis of structure and of words and their meanings.

Many freshmen do not realize that different methods must be used in reading a novel or short story and in reading a text in social studies or science. Such students are seriously handicapped in their studying, and often are in difficulty during their entire first year at the College.

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## Implementing Semantics

(*Continued from Page 1*)

selections, too) as behavior of individuals in a social context.

The most important things, we found, were (1) to break through the students' unconsciousness that there *is* a language-problem, and (2) to train them in a technique of analyzing language-situations. In regard to the first: students generally are unaware that their own connotations for words are not everybody's connotations; hence, when they read a passage, they assume that what they read is what "it says." We analyze in class a large number of passages where the "same" word has differing connotations, emotional weightings and even denotations, and follow this up with considerable explanation of connotation-denotation, stereotypes, projections, etc.

It is very important to make the student analyze the statement always *before* he expresses agreement or disagreement. To train students in observation and discrimination, we also have the student write a considerable amount of strict factual report, excluding his own judgments and emotions, and words colored by them. We could use almost any material, since we were not trying to teach "subject-matter," but rather trying to change the student's *attitude* toward language so that he will recognize a statement, whatever it is, for what it is. We use short poems, passages in essays, newspaper material, and even cartoons.

In regard to the second chief point, we try to train the student to read, evaluate and criticize his own and others' writings, not in the "literary abstract," but as language-behaviors in a verbal *and social* context. We make the student analyze the passage and decide what this writer is actually trying to do with this particular language-behavior and how he is doing it in the social context in which he speaks. Only then do we have the student evaluate the passage. Incidentally, the same procedure introduces cooperative solving of problems to replace the competitive verbalism that is too frequently present in English classes. Again, I think that a variety of materials —news accounts, editorials, advertisements, essays, and poems—is desirable.

The two new textbooks based on General Semantics (Hayakawa's *Language in Action* and Lee's *Speech Habits in Human Affairs*) both contain excellent suggestions and exercises. Still, I am rather of the opinion that the best results come when each teacher *and his class* find their own exercise materials. Many general suggestions, probably more valuable for the teacher than prepared exercises, will be found in books like Korzybski's *Science and Sanity* or Lynd's *Knowledge for What?*

It seems to me that one thing to remember all through the course is that the freshman is not "ignorant," as too many of us like to assert; rather—even as you and I —he knows a great many verbal statements which are not true; and a great many true statements he knows inadequately because of limitations of experience and lack of a technique for relating verbal statements to the world in which he lives.

We would of course be very glad to hear other teachers' experiences, criticisms, or suggestions about semantics.

Francis P. Chisholm,
Syracuse University

## This Has Worked for Me

Admitting that the following devices are not by any means original and may perhaps be old stories to all, I submit with all diffidence some methods I have found helpful in teaching composition.

The practices may be grouped under the somewhat learned headings of analysis, crisis, and synthesis, that is, establishing a rule or guiding principle, learning its proper use through taste and critical appreciation, and finally embodying the rule in synthesis or actual composition.

Any textbook of poetry, oratory, essay, or of other species of composition will furnish topics for analysis. Such books must generalize, and the points which they teach may be verified in any particular author or work. These are research studies on a small scale, and may be reported in essay form, where the point will be identified by accurate definition, classified in various kinds and specified by pointing out the characteristic usage in the work assigned.

The results of the study may be presented orally or in the form of a debate. One will write on the board a short paragraph or a stanza which he will defend as better in the particular feature than the passage written by his opponent. A five-minute speech with one-minute rebuttal and a vote of the class will give interest. Longer passages in the same or different authors are allotted to sections of the class, and each section will cite a particular example of clearness, interest, or force to be matched in another section. I have found Sophomores to get excited and even lose their temper in such contests. The spirit of rivalry often overcomes the affected or blasé indifference of the collegians just leaving their teens.

For developing taste in the proper use of any excellence of style, I have found the application of brief and deserving criticisms of good critics helpful. Moulton's *Library of Literary Criticism* furnishes such criticisms, which may be applied to a particular work or to part of a work. The art of criticism is learned by familiarity with the judgments of good critics. In the art of literature as in all art, between the theory founded on analysis and the practice of synthesis there must intervene that critical judgment called taste, which will keep every principle from defect or excess. In the sciences of grammar and of logic, statements are either correct or incorrect. In the art of composition, the limits are not so definite, and taste must always direct and control the product. No point of style can be used at all times indiscriminately, and an appreciation of the taste of good writers leads to good taste in students.

Synthesis or composition is of course the main objective—a necessary condition for the art of literature as distinguished from its science and criticism but a heavy burden on the teacher. When a speech has been completed, a play has been read, or other extended work has been commented on, it has proved a help for a comprehensive view of the whole, to present some general feature in a literary graph. The graph may take several forms beside the simple line of a fever chart. A circle with the sections marked on the circumference and with the high point at the center or at the circumference is one geometrical form. Artistically inclined students have depicted the composition feature under a variety of analogies. A mountain-range, a city sky line, the pipes of an organ, a train of cars, a shelf of books, even a wash line, have served by size and color and proper numbering to depict the required feature.

Serious parodies reflecting some author's style, afford more scope than the graphs for actual composition. Horace's fable of the Country Mouse and City Mouse have been presented as a Shakespearean scene and as a fragment of a Tennysonian idyl.

More originality will be displayed in a class novel or play. The class will each present a plot. The best will be chosen. The whole story or drama will then be divided among the members. A committee headed by the preferred author will assign the parts and give each member the necessary information. Before the days of the moving-picture serial, I had high-school students write successive chapters of a story whose main purpose was to put the hero in such a predicament that the writer of the next chapter could not extricate him. The chapters approved by the class were kept in a book which served as a guide to those who continued the story.

After a course on Shakespeare's dramatic art, I gave the plot of *Coriolanus* as a conflict between Guelphs and Ghibellines with all the names of places and persons changed. The class was asked to exemplify Shakespearean traits by showing how the plot would be developed by Shakespeare. For the combined novels and dramas already mentioned and for the serial story, if no satisfactory plot is forthcoming from the class, there are books which synopsize plays, novels, and short stories, and these synopses disguised may be dictated. A comparison of the student's version with the original often proves instructive. I asked in the disguised plot of *Coriolanus*, how the siege of a great city could be lifted dramatically. One student made the brilliant suggestion that a rainstorm might do it. It was in order to state that not even a football game would cease in a rain.

Francis P. Donnelly, S.J.
Fordham University

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## For All Semanticists

Pray tell, who are cutting up antics,
As they worship, the goddess, Semantics?
Whether Polish or Jappish
Or English or Lappish,[1]
They're all of them arrant[2] pedantics.

They speak an impoverished lingo,
Hardly fit for human or Gringo,
Which they nominate Basic;[3]
Leaves me quite lackadaisic;
A "red bird" is not a "flamingo."

There are also the Chases and Lees,
Who go in for this mental strip-tease;[4]
For with powder on nose
And body in clothes,
One can see only up to the knees.[5]

I take up my shiny golf club,
Dig deep into Nature's thick shrub,
But for all my fine irons
And Nature's environs,
My story's the "Tale of a Dub."[6]

A tool is as good as the user;
The crew is the life of the cruiser;
If you want to be dense[7]
Or you want to make sense,
It's you are the ultimate chooser.

And so under "twenty Atlantics,"[8]
I bury the goddess, Semantics,
Confoundedly cocky;
May she rest there *in pace!*
"I tank I go"[9] join the romantics.[10]

[1] A veiled reference to Richards, Korzybski, Hayakawa—three in the glorious apostolic succession of semanticists. "Lappish" is used chiefly for the rhyme but may be taken to mean all who lap it up.

[2] The original MS had "errant," which was probably closer to the truth.

[3] Basic English—a subtle form of regimentation, known perhaps better as "The Tyranny of 850 Words."

[4] Implications entirely "Chased"; reference to Irving and not to Gypsy Rose.

[5] The clothes metaphor has been used in great literature before; nor are we attempting to "clothes" the subject.

[6] To parody an author internationally famous for curing "ham." Cf. the name of an American educational philanthropist and butcher.

[7] A quality frequently found in semanticists, especially at their professional shindigs, where a language comprehensible only to the initiated is used to escape the dead level of proletarian Basic. See program of the International Institute for the Sane and Scientific Study of Semantics.

[8] A phrase from a work by Thomas DeQuincey, which, translated into Basic, would be like a paraphrase of a Platonic dialog by Joe Louis.

[9] A phrase made immortal by the Swedish Sphinx.

[10] Those who still believe that language is a rich and mobile medium of expression and who still seem able to distinguish between a science and an art.

P. L. Schacht
Capital University

## Training Flight In English Composition

The army aviator is not allowed to try solo flying at the beginning of his training. Instead, he takes preliminary ground-school courses, which are followed by several weeks of dual-control flying under the instruction of an experienced aviator. The plane has two cockpits, each fitted with controls that permit the two flyers to participate fully in each other's piloting. In this way the teacher can follow the movements of his pupil, correctively if need be, and the pupil can get the feel of the controls as they are touched to life beneath the hand and foot of an expert. This method, indispensable in aviation, may be useful in teaching the undergraduate to write.

The undergraduate I have in mind is taking his first semester of freshman English. It is no longer enough for the teacher to assign him a theme on a prescribed, suggested, or elected subject. It is foolish to expect him without aid or guidance to imitate the achievement of an accomplished author. And just as foolish is the notion that ideas from a book of essays that provoke a crazy-quilt discussion in the composition class will make the freshman a competent writer. These approaches fail to take account of the writer's work as a kind of craftsmanship.

My analogy is imperfect, of course. But take any good short composition that approximates a unit of construction, and you have a satisfactory training plane—a selection, let us say, from Hamlin Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*, pp. 139-142, which relates a single incident in the boyhood of the author—the awakening of the boy to fetch the doctor for his sick father.

This passage is written in the first person of the conventional autobiography, and the student is to rewrite it in the third person, becoming the omniscient observer found in most fiction. If he is to succeed he will have to make several changes in the original composition; not merely the swapping of pronouns, but changes in diction, syntax, and paragraph structure. He will retain of course as much of the original as he can. Sometimes for fifty words or more he will merely copy Hamlin Garland, but constantly he must be alert to decide to what extent he must remake the piece at any given point. That is, a part of the time he will be following the technical movements of the original craftsman, and the rest of the time he will be modifying those movements to suit the conditions under which the narrative is to have its second being.

It will be only a short training flight, but in making it the student will have duplicated here and there the performance of his teacher, and elsewhere he will have made certain adjustments that belong also to the craft of writing. It is possible that his consciousness of what the writer does when he writes will be heightened by this kind of exercise. It is elementary and easy and interesting. Students have found it satisfying, too, for they can readily tell when they have completed it in a fairly acceptable way.

It is not the first exercise that should be prescribed as a part of the dual-control system of instruction: the first would be the making of an exact copy of a short unit of narrative, and this making done not carelessly but consciously. The exercise I have been describing would be preceded and followed by a number of kindred exercises, the whole series leading toward independent creative activity—toward, in the language of aviation, the first solo flight.

August H. Mason
University of Alabama

## Meeting of New Group In Tennessee a Success

A good start for the new regional group of Tennessee English teachers is reported by Professor John C. Hodges of the University of Tennessee, Chairman of the Program Committee. The first meeting, held at Knoxville on April 18, was attended by 150 persons.

Instruction in English in the present emergency was the theme of the luncheon meeting, at which members heard addresses on "The Teacher of English Faces a Crisis," by John J. DeBoers, President of NCTE, and "The Role of the English Teacher in War Time," by Everett Derryberry, President of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute. Professor Alwin Thaler, University of Tennessee, led the general discussion. The address of President DeBoers, who did not attend the meeting, was presented by means of a phonograph transcription.

The normal functions of English teachers also received attention. In the morning session the elementary school section discussed: English as a Factor in Developing Community Understanding, Normal Speech Development in Children, Creative Expression in English, and Children's Literature; and the high school and college section: The Last Year of High School—Its Relation to Earlier Training and to Future Needs of Students. Discussion of the latter topic was continued at the joint session held in the afternoon, at which attention was also given to: Grammar and Expression, The Composition Program of the Senior Year, and A Unified English Program.

## If You Should Ask Us

A not-so-private irritation with us is the habit of using "may" when "can" is really called for. We don't mind it at all when "can" is used for "may," but people who thus over-correct one of childhood's commonest colloquialisms remind us of the old maid (male or female) who purses her lips and asks, "Whom did you say was there?" We recently got a letter from a campus restaurant that said, "You may get a good lunch here for 65 cents." These days, it seems, you have to take your chances. "You will" frequently resolves the doubt, and it certainly has more force.

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